137, Leinster Road, Dublin
Jan. 16. 1862

Dear Mr May — Now you see I have provided myself with as near an imitation as I could get, of that beautiful paper on which you write your beautiful letters, which fill me with ~~unma~~ unmalevolent envy — they are so perfect in paper, penmanship style and so pretty. Indeed they are patterns in all these respects & I have seldom any exception to take to the contents & none to the composition. When I come into town in the morning I first of all ask for Alfred, and then throw a sharp look on my side of the office desk to see whether there are any letters, for which I have quite a weakness — and none that come are more welcome than yours — nor are there any from any one now surviving that give me such a feast, so that I am always sorry when I come to the end. The last puzzled me a little on reading the address — you began with "Dear friend, Richard Webb" — I thought perhaps you took this way of sending a letter to my son Richard. I am Richard Davis Webb, I would have you to know. I was named after a rich old uncle of mine Richard Davis who was my grandmother's brother & was at that time regarded as the great man of the family — though he afterwards died poor enough. The D. serves now as a distinction mark for me as there were several Richard Webbs in our circle. — A good deal of the beginning of your letter is filled with lamentations over the evil course of England towards you America. Now I think you are rather unfair when you talk & think of England as one treacherous, hypocritical, abandoned, unsatisfactory female. Now I hope you will bear with me in what I am about to say. I am only an Irishman. I am not an Englishman, nor have I an Englishman's pride, prejudices, preferences, vanities. Whatever I have of these are of another kind. I am more of a well wisher to Free America than to England. I expect that more good will enure to the human race from you than from her. My opinion of the humanity, kindliness, civilization, benevolence of the American people has been continually rising since the war began. In short I am so warm on your behalf & sincerely so, that I have been told to my face that I was crazed on that subject. Now having said this much for myself I will say that while if I had been an American resident in New England as you have been I should most likely think & talk as you do about England, I who am on this side of the Atlantic cannot honestly do so. That a very large portion of the nobility, the gentry & of the upper mercantile & wealthy classes who are saturated with aristocratic ideas & aspirations should hate any republic & should be ready to back up the Devil if attacked the greatest & most powerful of all republics with any chance of success, I don't at all wonder. Years before any body looked for this war, it was a frequent remark of mine that our English rulers snubbed & discountenanced Republics. They countenanced the attack of the French on the Roman republic — they or at least Lord Palmerston notoriously applauded Louis Napoleon for the success of his treacherous coup d'état against the French republic. Goldwin Smith very clearly exposed this in an article in the Atlantic Monthly, I think it was. It has not been possible to hold any large public & fairly constituted meeting on behalf of the South in any part of England where the working people abound & are influential & intelligent. Whilst your ~~most~~

Alfred Webb

copperhead democracy who are more zealous for
the slaveholder than for their own liberty & fair
fame, can be numbered by the hundreds of thousands
and whilst rich merchants in New York & Boston are
ready for the sake of gain to supply the sinews of war
to the Southern rebels, you should not wonder that the
merchants of Liverpool, & the manufacturers of Sheffield,
Birmingham & Manchester are not more scrupulous.
As to the mass of the rural population of England they
know nothing of the merits of the quarrel & hardly anything of the facts. It is hard for an American to comprehend the depth of their ignorance. It seems to me
there is hardly a more stupid, rude peasantry in
Europe! As to the Irish Catholics they are the born
thralls of their priests who hate a republic & abhor protestantism & would rejoice to see the utter failure of
the Great experiment. They believe the Pope is the best as
he is of course the holiest ruler on earth & that no Italians
are happy who have not him to reign over them. They
would applaud young Bomba tomorrow if he were to
visit Dublin & whilst I am sure thousands of them would
cheerfully tear Garibaldi in pieces. — I do not say what
I am about to say in order to make apologies for "England" —
but is it not your opinion that if she had done as she
ought to have done the Rebellion would have been suppressed long ago, and Slavery would have been given another
lease of its life, than which nothing could be worse for
you or for the hopes of mankind! I know of nothing in the
~~whole~~ course of history that seems to me more plainly
providential than the whole course of this civil war. It
has been a terrible discipline but it has so far as we can
see fairly worked out the nation's salvation so far.

One thing I have deduced from the sympathy with the
South & the indifference to Slavery evinced by so
many religious professors & people otherwise of worth &
intelligence. It is this. I learn to place less & less
confidence in any mere varnish & to ~~learn to~~ judge men

only by their fruits. Some time ago, just before I left Greenfield, my daughters & I spent an evening by invitation with Rev. James Martineau & his family who had taken a lodge about two miles from us within 500 feet of the top of the Three Rock Mountain. The wife and three daughters are refined & very pleasing people. He himself is a most interesting man on religious subjects — a fine reasoner, a deep thinker & I believe a profound scholar & industrious student. Yet although Harriet's brother I have long heard of him as strongly proslavery, and now as a Southern sympathizer! In a late number of the Standard was a letter from M. D. Conway to the Boston "Commonwealth" on the extent to which he found Southern sympathies prevalent among "Liberal Christians", he names a John Page Hopps as having been a public champion & lecturer on that side. And I know some liberal friends of mine look on Hopps as an admirable religious teacher. Now I could not confide in such a man's notions on any important speculative subject or on any question of morals. Indeed I am as much puzzled as you can be to account for the Southern proclivities of many otherwise intelligent, enlightened, worthy people whom I see & hear of. I feel confounded at times in the presence of these things. It is something like Satan saying "Evil be thou my good!" The threats & swagger of former American Governments (I know they were proslavery) the San Juan affair, the former affair of the boundary, the dismissal of Sir John Crampton, the Trent affair, the threats against Canada all these things I know can be explained & talked of to no end — but they are all mixed up in people's minds & have produced a kind of antagonism & irritation & a feeling that you are likely to be too powerful — that it would be safer if North & South were not one compact nation. Feelings of this kind

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influence multitudes who are I am persuaded utterly opposed to slavery in their ~~op~~ own opinions, and I have been often accused of unfairness & of something like an assumption of special self righteousness as an anti slavery man when I have denounced all sympathy with the South as sympathy in point of fact with their "peculiar institution." — As to war with England whilst I think that nations have often gone to war with one another on less grounds ~~than~~ of offence than you have with many Englishmen [I do not say with England] I cannot imagine that any real friends of the Free States would countenance anything so foolish. Unquestionably both nations if their blood were up could do each other an infinity of mischief — but what good could be done by such a proceeding I really cannot imagine. It is certain that those classes would suffer most in England who as classes are your firmest friends.

You think I could do good service by writing in our newspapers. Well, now, it is the simple truth that American affairs are so fully, so ably, candidly & honestly discussed & the good cause so well defended by a great many papers of high character & large circulation that I could add nothing which is not better said by the editors. I feel sure you are not at all aware ~~th~~ how many newspapers of great talent & large circulation which ably advocate the Northern side. Mr Chesson has assured me that the joint circulation of the anti slavery papers in London is something prodigious — one of them being greater than that of the Times. I often think when I see thanks given to Mill, Cairnes, Cobden & Bright, how much more is due to the editors of the Daily News, Spectator, Northern Whig, Globe, Observer, Leeds Mercury, Manchester Examiner & such papers who labour continually, perseveringly, intelligently & anonymously without hope of reward in reputation to enlighten the public mind (no easy matter) as to the merits of this struggle. I wish the names of some of these men were better known in America. Indeed many of them are quite unknown to myself. The number of newspapers on this side is not nearly so great as on yours — and it is difficult to get access to the columns of those who are hostile to the North whilst those which are friendly are so amply supplied with much better writing than I am master of that it would be superfluous to address them. Our Dublin papers both Catholic & Protestant are a wretched sordid lot — looking at every thing that is offered them in the light of their own pecuniary interest. — In a late letter of the Times correspondent from New York, quoted in one of our papers, I observe he talks about European intervention. He must be talking for the sake of having something to say. It is my belief that owing to the persevering industry & great influence of Mr Cobden exerted through the press & speeches at public meetings the English mind is becoming thoroughly tired of intervention & is more & more resolved to stay at home & mind its own affairs. I never except at the time of the Trent affair had any fear of an English intervention in your war with the South. I believe whatever may be the preferences of individuals, the nation as such is sincerely anxious to remain neutral. Indeed an opinion is rapidly growing (if any opinion can be said to grow rapidly in England) that England would be much stronger, richer — better off if she would leave her colonies to take care of themselves & that she gives them far more than she gets from them in any way. I think she would be wealthier & her commerce quite as great if Canada, Australia, the Cape, New Zealand, & India were left to take care of themselves. If you are to go to war with England out of spite or for revenge, well & good. I don't at all doubt but that plenty of mischief will be done on both sides — that the stream of emigration from Ireland would be delayed for years which would be a real calamity to our poor people — that the seeds of enmity & bitterness for generations would be abundantly sown — but that any good would be done to any but the unprincipled dealers on both sides I don't at all believe. It would cause immense suffering not to the rich but to the poor, your truest friends in England & it could not fail to delay the settlement of the South which is of far more real importance to you than the punishment of any body here. Indeed the wealth of the English nobility, gentry, & commercial great men is so vast in England that I don't see how a war could hurt them except by the loss of some of their relations in battle & that they look upon as all in the order of nature as it merely helps off some younger sons, who could not otherwise be so creditably provided for. —— I am quite sure that a very small portion if any of the English people wish for war ~~for~~ with the United States. Most English men would feel disgraced to have their nation the ally of slaveholders. Nevertheless a vast deal of ignorance & prejudice prevails for which the people are as much to be pitied as blamed. It is clear that the acts of men have generally not much to do with their declared religious principles: They are led rather by their prejudices. I don't want to defend such errors. I only want to account for them & to say that going to war would be a very bad way of bringing things right, & even ineffectual as a means of revenge — for the suffering would not fall upon the actual sinners. It is cause of continual amazement & mortification when I see the kind of people who are utterly wrong on the American question. It sometimes seems as if religion, education, civilization, & the lessons of morality did them no good.

Dear me! how I wish I could talk to you. One hour's talk would be better than any quantity of my bad writing on this thin paper. As to your letters they are a downright luxury to see & to read. — You ask about the information you prepared for Dr Hancock. I sent it to him immediately – but owing to the death of an uncle whose affairs he had to superintend, he was prevented from attending either the Social Science or the British Association Meetings at which he meant to make use of them. Since then I met him & he told me he intended to use them on other occasions as opportunity offered. I am sorry the information you so carefully collected was not more promptly utilized. I should have mentioned this matter before. Since that letter came I have seen other summaries of anti slavery progress of a similar character. — It is common for talkers here to say that after all the North (as you say "England") does not care a bit for the blacks than the South. Facts & arguments with such people are like water on a duck's back. You might as well try to persuade an Irish Catholic that the Pope is not infallible or Antonelli no saint. — I don't regret that you showed my remarks to W. L. G. though of course it was meant for you rather than for him. But he'll hardly mend his style at this time of life. I have a maxim that it is generally hopeless to look for any important change in any one who has ~~passed~~ past 50. I was really grieved at what he said about Professor Newman, a man for whose uprightness, right mindedness & moral courage I have the highest respect – almost veneration. I think for one accustomed like Garrison to look on things in the light of morals instead of political expediency it is perfectly wonderful he could regard Prof. Newman's letter in such

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a disrespectful contemptuous light. Newman's objections to Lincoln are such as W. L. G. would have been likely to make himself as an abolitionist & a moralist had he not the opportunity of taking a large view of things on the spot, & of making up his mind that all points & circumstances considered, no better wiser & honester man can be had for the place. This has always been my own view. But I cannot wonder that Newman, and even Phillips, Pillsbury & Foster who have been always thinking of what ought to be are now too prone to ask for what they wish for rather than what can be reasonably expected. Indeed perfect accuracy of judgement is so rare a gift that I think we should have great forbearance to those who come in want of it. You refer with great delicacy to what you regard as my infirmity of vision at the beginning of the war. I cannot accuse myself of having ever changed my mind about Slavery but I had been so long accustomed to regard the vast majority of the Northern people as professing in the abolition sense, (& also with the abolitionists) to look on the maintenance of the Union as nothing compared with the abolition of Slavery, — and it was so often proclaimed in the Standard that the people, when the war broke out, were willing (as I think they were till very lately) to sacrifice the Slaves for the sake of a reconciliation with the South; under these circumstances, I say, I at one time was very nearly led to think (also with many abolitionists) that the Slave had a better chance of ultimate freedom if the Union were dissolved, than if a peace were made on the basis of a compromise such as the North was until lately willing to accede to. Indeed until lately complaints & apprehensions respecting the ultimate fate of the colored people have been so abundant in the Standard even in the leaders — and so many facts have been related in its columns of the cruelty & injustice with which colored people including soldiers have been treated by Northern troops & Northern leaders that I was frequently deterred from lending my Standard lest it should give a handle to the accusations of those unfriendly to the North. My doubts & difficulties & hesitations have been expressed to my American friends whilst I have been abundantly one sided when I have talked at home. Besides I am not a Solomon, nor a Pope, nor a Garrison, nor have I ever set up for an infallible man in any way. On the whole however I consider myself tolerably ~~[illegible]~~ consistent, independent minded, and as staunch (though not at all a very effective) friend of the slave as any in New England. Now, Miss Mary, is not that insufferably conceited in your unseen Irish friend who looks forward longingly for the book you mean to send him. By the way I was wishing for that very book — for I delight in Mrs Childs writings & have a most unaffected respect for her noble self. By the way I wonder could her carte be got for me. But perhaps I asked for it before.

I am glad you think my donation a fair one. I feared it might seem rather shabby. But this year has been one of rather hard work & poor returns in the way of business & besides I have had to meet (very willingly) several demands on behalf of the cotton hands. Indeed these friends here will have to help them probably for some time to come. It is only due to you that we should do our share now that the pinch has come. I can truly say that I wish for larger means on no account more than that I might assist in this way. It seems to me a small thing to ask for money when one has it to give. I hate to think of differences of residence or of nationality making any difference in the willingness to help in such a cause in which we have to beg cordially coöperated. I would be poorly off without my American friends & correspondents. Excepting Wright, Estlin & Richd there is nobody to whom I write so intimately as to you. —— You ask do I sometimes walk the 2 miles between home & office. Yes I generally walk to office morning & evening, taking a car or an omnibus (which costs 3d) only when particularly hurried or in very wet weather. — Spunk is I believe a legitimate English word. You have doubtless heard or read that many of your Yankee words, now obsolete in England were brought over from the mother country by early settlers. It is the same as to many English words still used in Ireland but no longer known in London. — As to the "very long (undoubtedly tedious) letter" to Eliza Wigham I thought it delightful — so did Miss Estlin — so did Mrs Palmer to whom I sent it — so did every body. Indeed I honestly think you could not write a tedious letter if you tried. — I dont know whether I told you I have seen a good deal of Levi Coffin & I think he enjoyed the society of one who was strong on the Northern side (as he is) & was up to the ins & outs of the Anti Slavery Question & was besides heartily glad to take him by the hand. He speaks in the highest terms of the abolitionists & is a liberal, devoted, good man — eaten up with the desire to fulfil his mission. He is a good sample of a plain, grave, rather shy Quaker such as I used to meet in the days of my youth. He is a wretchedly bad speaker I think as tedious as I ever met with — but among "friends" his character made up for the defects of his eloquence. Not so with the public at large.

12/ As to the remarks of the English pro-rebel papers their disingenuousness, villainy, & dishonesty pass description. They pervert and lie without shame. Sherman's march was ably accomplished but base Lorry Hardee escaped him. It is altogether a wonderful & mighty drama that is being played out — the theater is prodigious, and the stakes impending involve vast interests to the whole human family. Multitudes of very decent sort of people here regard them much as so many swine might — & their obtuseness is really pitiable.

Do you know aught of Dr Dio Lewis of Boston. We have lately read his book on Consumption Curable with illustrations of the Movement Cure, which we read with great admiration ~~of~~ and satisfaction. Do you know anything about him?

Richard's address is simply San Francisco. We generally hear from him once in 2 or 3 weeks. He is working away as a printer & I fancy is doggedly determined to make his way in some path or other. He is very secretive & all we can do is keep him continually reminded of home (which he is well disposed to let us forget to do) and leave him in other respects to himself.

I ought to have thanked you before for Parton's Life of Butler. It is most interesting & I think honest. I am sure I hope it is honest — for I never was disposed to join in the hypocritical outcry against him. His administration of New Orleans was clearly beneficent. He was just the man for such work & I think it was a blunder to remove him. I am glad your boys have got on so safely so far. With kind regards to your circle I am affectionately your friend

Richard D. Webb.

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